

1 MULTI-LAYERED, QUICK CHANGE SIGNAGE SYSTEM

2 Cross-Reference to Related Application

3 This application claims the benefit of and priority from United States provisional
4 application Serial No. 60/409,828 filed September 9, 2002.

5 Background and Brief Summary of Invention

6 The present invention relates generally to signage systems. More particularly, the
7 present invention provides a quickly changeable signage system for use, for example, as
8 personnel identifiers. The signage system is used advantageously in conjunction with
9 personnel cubicles. The signage system allows each individual to select a series of
10 customized graphic images which may be used in conjunction with the alphanumeric
11 information displayed on a transparent cover sheet of the sign. The selected graphic image
12 is viewable through the transparent cover.

13 The prior art includes transparent sign supports as shown in the Mirza U.S. patent
14 6,347,471. However, Mirza does not teach a multi-layered sign in which a transparent cover
15 includes alphanumeric information such as an individual's name and title and wherein a sheet
16 behind or below the transparent cover sheet carries a selected graphic image.

17 The prior art also includes signage systems with transparent substrates. An example
18 is the Lovison U.S. patent 5,223,357 wherein a holographic film is required. Another example
19 is the Longobardi U.S. patent 4,933,218 which requires the use of thick ridges of viscous
20 subject matter. The present invention does not require the use of holographic film or thick
21 ridges of viscous ink.

22 The prior art also includes changeable signage systems such as the Whitehouse U.S.
23 patent 5,428,914. The disadvantage of Whitehouse is that a rather cumbersome perforated
24 base is required. The Kane U.S. patent 4,654,101 teaches a changeable display sign but it
25 requires a relatively large number of separate component pieces to be interfitted in close
26 abutting relationships. The present invention avoids the use of many separate pieces that

1 have to be carefully interfitted together. Rather, the present invention utilizes a series of
2 sheets that simply overlie each other and are carried by a rather simple frame.

3 A primary object of the invention is to provide a signage system wherein each individual
4 sign includes an alphanumeric display and a graphic display and wherein the graphic display
5 is readily interchangeable with alternate graphics.

6 A further object of the invention is to provide a signage system for use by personnel
7 wherein each person is able to select his or her own custom set of graphic images to be
8 displayed together with alphanumeric data describing the person and his or her position.

9 Another object of the invention is to provide a signage system wherein those portions
10 of the system containing alphanumeric data and graphic images are readily transported to
11 another location.

12 A further object of the invention is to provide a signage system wherein a transparent
13 cover sheet is utilized which displays alphanumeric information and one or more opaque
14 sheets may be interchangeably placed behind the cover sheet to display selected graphic
15 images along with the alphanumeric data displayed by the cover sheet.

16 Other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following
17 description and drawings wherein:

18 Brief Description of the Drawings

19 Fig. 1 is an exploded perspective view illustrating a preferred embodiment of the
20 invention;

21 Fig. 2 is a front elevational view displaying the graphic image of a railroad locomotive
22 behind a transparent cover sheet containing alphanumeric information pertaining to JANE
23 DOE;

24 Fig. 3 is a front elevational view showing the same cover sheet used in Fig. 2 but
25 wherein a different sheet carrying a graphic image of palm trees has been placed adjacent
26 and behind the transparent cover sheet;

1 Fig. 4 is a front elevational view of the same sign wherein a third graphic image of a
2 teed golf ball and head of a driver is displayed along with the alphanumeric information on the
3 cover sheet; and

4 Fig. 5 shows a front elevational view of the sign displayed in Figs. 2-4 wherein a fourth
5 graphic image of a bird is displayed with the JANE DOE cover sheet.

6 Detailed Description of the Drawings

7 Fig. 1 is an exploded, perspective view illustrating one embodiment of the invention.
8 A conventional plastic frame 10 is provided which may be connected to a wall or cubicle by
9 any of a variety of connectors known in the art. For example, plastic frame 10 may be
10 connected by picture hanging brackets, VELCRO or adhesive. Plastic frame 10 has a
11 thickness to accommodate multiple layers of plastic or paper, as described below. Addi-
12 tionally, a non-glare plastic lens 20 is supported by frame 10. A customized transparency 30
13 is provided which is preferably transparent plastic. Transparency 30 carries an opaque
14 alphanumeric display 31 which, as shown in Fig. 1, is JANE DOE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.
15 The opaque alphanumeric display of data is permanently attached to transparency 30 in a first
16 region 35 of transparency 30. As shown in Fig. 1, the first region 35 is the lower half of
17 transparency 30. Transparent cover sheet 30 has a second region 36 which is the top portion
18 of sheet 30. Transparent cover sheet 30 is positioned immediately behind the non-glare
19 plastic lens 20.

20 The invention also includes a layer of one or more graphic images carried on opaque
21 sheets 41-49. The sheets 41-49 comprise a graphic image set 40 with customized images.
22 For example, sheet 41 may carry a graphic image 51 of a train locomotive. The image 51 is
23 displayed in region 55 of sheet 41 which as illustrated is in the upper portion of sheet 41 so
24 the graphic image will not interfere with the alphanumeric image carried on transparency 30.
25 Each of the separate sheets 41-49 carries a different graphic image. Preferably the separate
26 graphic images are selected by the particular employee to whom the sign pertains. The

1 graphic images may be changed quickly by simply opening the non-glare plastic lens 20
2 relative to frame 10, selecting any desired graphic image displayed on sheets 41-49, moving
3 that sheet forward so that it lies adjacent the transparent cover sheet 30 and reassembling
4 plastic lens 20 into frame 10.

5 The signage system is also highly portable in that, if the individual to whom the sign
6 pertains is transferred to a new cubicle or office, the transparency and sheets 41-49 are
7 quickly removed by the employee and simply transported to his or her new location.

8 It is also within the scope of the invention to provide graphic images such as 51 which
9 may be displayed over a larger portion of the sheet on which it is carried provided that the
10 graphic image does not unduly interfere with the alphanumeric data carried on transparency
11 30. By "interfere" we mean that the graphic image renders all or a portion of the alphanumeric
12 display illegible or unclear.

13 The sheets 41-49 carrying the graphic images are opaque and may be of any suitable
14 material such as paper or plastic. The graphic images, such as 51, may be applied by a
15 variety of techniques known in the art. The sheets 41-49 and cover sheet 30 form a stack of
16 sheets of approximately the same size.

17 Fig. 2-5 are front elevational views illustrating how the graphic images can be readily
18 changed. Fig. 2 contains the alphanumeric information JANE DOE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
19 carried by transparency 30. The graphic image 51 of a railroad locomotive is carried by sheet
20 41 and is clearly visible through the upper portion of transparency 30. Fig. 3 illustrates the
21 appearance of the sign when sheet 42 carrying the graphic image of palm trees 52 has been
22 placed adjacent and behind transparency 30. The sign now takes on an entirely new
23 appearance from that shown in Fig. 2. Fig. 4 illustrates yet a third graphic image 53 of a teed
24 up golf ball and the head of a driver on sheet 43 which has now been placed adjacent to
25 transparency 30. Fig. 5 illustrates a graphic image of a bird 54 carried on sheet 44 when
26 sheet 44 is placed adjacent to and immediately behind transparency 30.

1 As can be seen from Figs. 2-5, the overall character of the sign for JANE DOE can be
2 quickly changed by simply placing a desired sheet with a different graphic image behind
3 transparent sheet 30.

4 Although the graphic images in Fig. 2-5 are shown displayed above the alphanumeric
5 data, it is also within the scope of the invention to provide a graphic image that extends into
6 the region of the alphanumeric data as well. For example, the graphic image may be of the
7 sky, the beach, the ocean or a lake wherein the graphic image displayed behind the
8 alphanumeric data does not conflict with or render the alphanumeric data illegible.

9 The foregoing description of the invention has been presented for purposes of
10 illustration and description and is not intended to be exhaustive or to limit the invention to the
11 precise form disclosed. Modifications and variations are possible in light of the above
12 teaching. The embodiments were chosen and described to best explain the principles of the
13 invention and its practical application to thereby enable others skilled in the art to best use
14 the invention in various embodiments and with various modifications suited to the particular
15 use contemplated. The scope of the invention is to be defined by the following claims.